

Chairman Sinrud and Committee Members, good afternoon. I am Mark Burzynski, Vice President of Health Affairs at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana. After having participated in the first session of Leadership Montana in 2004 and 2005, I had the privilege of becoming a Director on the Board of Leadership Montana. I ask you to support HB 366. On behalf of the State of Montana, Leadership Montana is worth the money.

Many of you may not be familiar with Leadership Montana. It is a not-for-profit entity dedicated to achieving several critical objectives on behalf of Montana. Leadership Montana is dedicated to developing leadership traits and skills in business and community leaders. It is dedicated to developing an understanding of many of the issues that are facing Montana. And most importantly, it is dedicated to developing relationships among community and business leaders, who are spread across the fourth largest state and spread across a myriad of industries. I am certain you appreciate how important relationships are among legislators, lobbyists, and business and community leaders that you trust as you are trying to work effectively on behalf of the State of Montana. Leadership Montana is trying to build those same relationships among community and business leaders whose paths may not otherwise cross, so that a variety of interests and view points might help Montana discover its preferred future in a non-partisan manner. In 3 short years, Leadership Montana has created a network of approximately 120 leaders committed to Montana. You have the opportunity to fuel that growth. What the state is being asked for is but a small portion of Leadership Montana's budget. Just so you know, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana contributes approximately \$10,000 per year to Leadership Montana because of the value that Leadership Montana has the potential to create on behalf of our state.

It is many people's impressions that I seem to know a lot about health care and health insurance, but that speaks little to the breadth and depth of Montana. Unfortunately all I really have a good understanding on in Montana is health care. Having been in the first class of Leadership Montana, I was exposed to bio-fuel, coal, natural gas, cattle, tourism, military, university system, superfund, to name but a few of the industries and/or issues. Without such exposure, I would hardly be positioned to help improve our state. I would hardly be positioned to engage in productive dialogue and planning. Just as an aside, 6 of my classmates in the first session of Leadership Montana undertook the issue of school funding. Our initial intent was to help design a better, more equitable approach to school

funding. After 6 months of trying, we surrendered. However, we learned a lot. All of us understand school funding better and understand the challenges you face in that regard as legislators. For even a few more Montanans to actually try to understand school funding and learn more than they would have reading the newspaper, watching the news, and/or hearing about court testimony, I certainly consider a step forward on behalf of Montana. Leadership Montana has provided me with the opportunity to engage in discussions with leaders with whom I have had the privilege to develop an effective, trusting relationship. We may not ultimately agree, but due to the culture created through Leadership Montana, the quality of the discussion will move us forward as a state.

Montana invests significantly in the education of its children and those adults that are considering career changes. I believe it would be equally wise to invest in community and business leaders from across our state as they endeavor to transform the image of Montana as the "last best place" into reality for its current residents and those that follow through Leadership Montana. Please support HB 366.

Thank you.